

Review

Analytical study of the Pedagogy of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

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The main objective of this study was to analyze the pedagogy as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. For conducting this study, philosophical and historical methods were employed. The primary and secondary sources related to Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's educational philosophy were evaluated after detailed analysis. The general philosophical tools used for the study was induction, deduction, dialectical analysis and synthesis. The study revealed that Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's system of education was psychological. His pedagogy is particularly rooted in individual attention and promotes creativity, encourages dialogue and attempts all-round development of the individual. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh advocated the method of discovery and activity, he believed in self-teaching that is how to learn and not to impart knowledge. The study further revealed that in future, teacher need not bind himself either to the ancient or the modern system but select only the most perfect and rapid means of mastering knowledge and the teacher should put the child onto the right road, to become perfect and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping but not interfering.

Key words: Aurobindo Ghosh, educational philosophy, pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

An explorer and adventurer in consciousness, a visionary of evolution (Raina, 2005: 17), Sri Aurobindo who had disclosed "*No one can write about my life because it has not been on the surface for man to see*" (Aurobindo, 1972), finds echo in Rabindranath Tagore, the fellow Bengali poet-artist and a Nobel Laureate with whom Aurobindo felt a deep mutuality, who too had warned that one should not look for the poet in his biography. In fact, McDermott felt that "Interpreting the life of great spiritual personality is always a treacherous enterprise and the life of Sri Aurobindo is peculiarly inscrutable" (Raina, 1997). Born in Calcutta, then the capital of British India on 15 August 1872, Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghosh - the Western middle name was given to him by his father at birth - was the third son of his parents.

Sri Aurobindo as a child born with such auspice should be having a divine mission to fulfill, a divine destiny to realize. Such was his mission and destiny too. "Sri Aurobindo mentions about his five dreams of which he became conscious at an early age in his life. At the age of eleven he received a strong impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes were coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it, particularly he had a strong feeling that he was born to make India free. His second dream was on the resurgence of Asia. Thirdly, he envisaged the world unity through a world government. Fourthly, he also

dreamt that India was going to be a great nation with her spiritual mission to the world, or otherwise, he thought that India was going to be the spiritual guru of the world. His last dream is related to the evolution and upliftment of the human race and the birth of race of super humans. He tried to live up to his dreams and saw them fairly fulfilled during his lifetime" (Pani, 1997: 2).

Objective of the study

This paper aims to study the pedagogy of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

DATA PROCEDURE

Philosophical and historical methods have been used and apart from that both primary as well as secondary sources related to Aurobindo Ghosh have been employed for the collection of data. Accordingly, the data were collected, scrutinized and critically analyzed for interpretation and for drawing conclusions.

Pedagogy as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

Sri Aurobindo's influence on educational thought has integral approach. The educator and the educand together with the multisided school formed the integral

pattern of education. In his integral scheme, the educand, the educator and the school each has been given its suitable place. None has been devalued. The ancient education was teacher centered whereas post modern education is child-centered. In the integral scheme of education, neither the educator nor the educand may have the sole importance but both are united in a common bond.

The aim of education, said Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is, *“To help the child to develop his intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and capacities, – a very different object from that of the old education which was simply to pack so much stereotyped knowledge into his resisting brain and impose a stereotyped rule of conduct on his struggling and dominated impulses”* (Aurobindo, 1972: 204). Education, according to Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is always self education. It is the process to realize the inner nature of the educand.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh believed education for transformation, which marks the culmination and completion of the educational process. This includes psychic education, spiritual education and supra-mental leading respectively to psychic transformation, spiritual transformation and supra-mental transformation of the human personality. He wanted the transformation of mind to super mind, man to superman through education. Sri Aurobindo remarked, *“The aim of human life is not to pursue pleasure or a career (which is only means) but to discover the divine and to manifest the self”*.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was a perfectionist. He was never satisfied with partial remedies, wished an integrated personality in man. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh provides a system of education which is useful both for the nation as well as for the world. It is the urge of the spirit towards mastery and perfection that is behind the post modern conception of progress. As he puts, *“That alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life, all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps to enter into the right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with the great total life, mind and soul of the humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member”*

(Pani, 1997: 22). Sri Aurobindo Ghosh’s scheme of education is integral in two senses. Firstly, it is integral in the sense of including all the aspects of the individual being, physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. Secondly, it is integral in the sense of being an education not only for the evolution of the individual alone but also of the nation and finally of the humanity. In his *„Essays on Gita”*, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh initially presented the concept of integral education as out bringing all the facets of an individual personality. The ultimate aim of education is the evolution of the total humanity which includes the evolution of the nation which in its turn depends upon the evolution of the individual. In this scheme of evolution, the principle of growth is unity in diversity. This unity

again maintains and helps the evolution of diversity. Thus, each individual in nation and each nation in humanity has to develop a system of education according to its own *Swabhav* (inherent disposition) and fulfilling its *Swadharma* (inner nature).

An important characteristic of integral education is its insistence on simultaneous development of knowledge, will, harmony and skill as also of all the parts of the being to the extent possible from the earliest stages of education. Since each individual child is unique in the composition of its qualities and characteristics, its capacities and propensities, integral education in its practice tends to become increasingly individualized. Again, for this very reason, the methods of education become increasingly dynamic involving active participation of the child in its own growth.

A special feature of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh’s system of education is that it is highly psychological. His pedagogy is particularly rooted in individual attention, to promote creativity, encourage dialogues, and attempt all-round development of the individual. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh advocated the method of discovery and activity. He believed in self-teaching, showing how to learn, but not imparting knowledge. As he puts it: *“Teacher should put the child onto the right road, to become perfect and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping but not interfering”* (Seeta, 1989: 211).

According to Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, the first thing the teacher has to do is to accustom the pupil to concentrate. This concentration should be first on things and then on words and ideas (Panday, 2003: 146). There are, according to Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, three instruments in the hands of the teacher: instruction, example and influence. The good teacher will seek to awaken much more than to instruct, he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experience by natural process and free expansion. He will not impose his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is productive and sow it as a seed, which will grow under the benign fostering within. He will know that the example is more powerful than instruction. Actually, the example is not that of the outward acts but of the inner motivation of life and the inner states and inner activities. Finally, he will also acknowledge that influence is more important than example. For influence proceeds from the power or contact of the teacher with his pupil, from the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into the pupil, even though in silence, all that which the teacher himself is or possesses. The good teacher is himself a constant student. He is a child leading children, and a light kindling other lights, a vessel and a channel (Joshi in Rajput, 2004: 126).

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is critical of the practice of teaching by snippets which is in practice in the existing system of education. Teaching by snippets, says Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, must be neglected to the lumber room of dead sorrows. He is critical since: *A subject is taught a little at a time, in conjunction with a host of others, with the result that what might be well learnt in a single year is badly learned in seven years and the boy goes out ill*

equipped, served with imperfect parcels of knowledge, master of none of the great departments of human knowledge (Raina, 2005: 27).

However, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is clear that in the future, education need not bind itself either to the ancient or the modern system but select only the most perfect and rapid means of mastering knowledge. For him every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyzer, and a merciless anatomist. Appeal to these qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it, is the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientists. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiring. Use it to draw him slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the ground work of the faculty of the artist. It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is particular that the first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments and until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. „The mother tongue“, he says *“is the proper medium of education and therefore, the first energy of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium”* (Raina, 2005: 27). In connection with language teaching, he advocates that when the mental instruments are sufficiently easy and swift, that is the time to introduce him to many languages, not when he can partially understand what he is taught and masters it laboriously and imperfectly. He believes in the disciplinary value of learning one language, which he says prepares one for mastering another. He maintains that with the facility developed in one’s own language, to master others is easier.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh speaks the three principles of teaching that provide a sound basis of a system of natural organization of the highest processes and movements of which the human nature is capable. They also form the basis of the theory and practice of integral education. In a text of convocation, a lecture was delivered by Prof. Maheswari (24th March, 2004) at Amritsar; the Prof. observed Sri Aurobindo Ghosh’s principle of true teaching:

“The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster; he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind; he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him; he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call for the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface...

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature.

There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common. Everyone has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in, however, small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.

The third principle of education is to work from the near to far, from that which is and which shall be. The basis of a man’s nature is almost always, in addition to his soul’s past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soul from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed....It is God’s arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit” (Maheswari, 2004).

Teacher should be able to eliminate his ego, master his mind, and develop an insight into human nature and to progress in impersonalization. The most important thing in a teacher is not only the knowledge but an effective pedagogy. An intellectual excellence is not sufficient without a development of other aspects of personality. The teacher should have the capacity to project himself to the educand so that he may have an understanding of the needs of the educand. He should be absolutely disciplined and having an integrated personality.

The teacher is the yardstick that measures the achievements and aspirations of both the individual and nation through his pedagogy. The worth and potentialities of a country gets evaluated in and through the work of the teacher. The people of a country are the enlarged replica of their teachers. They are the real nation builders.

Thus from the above discussion, it needs no description that the effective pedagogy is the pivot of any education system of younger students. On it rests the failure or the success of the system. If the teachers are well educated and if they are intellectually alive and take keen interest in their jobs, then only success is ensured. But if on the other hand they lack training in education and if they cannot give their heart to their profession, the system is destined to fail. Hence, creative pedagogy is a vital component of any educational institution.

CONCLUSION

The old concept of a teacher being an instructor and a

task master has now changed to an educator whose job is to inspire, stimulate, help and guide educands. The characteristic of an effective teacher include his knowledge of contents, ability to use different methods of teaching and personality traits such as self-control, self-mastery and patience with students, etc. The first task of the teacher is to keep the environment supplied with objects of interest suited to his students' learning. The second task of the teacher is to maintain their good will by removing the causes of disturbance. The third task is to enable the student to find his inner guide (conscience). A special feature of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's system of education is highly psychological. His methods of education are particular and are rooted in individual attention, promote creativity, encourage dialogues, and attempt all-round development of the individual. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh advocated the method of discovery and activity. He believed in self-teaching, how to learn and not to impart knowledge. And he says, „*Teacher should put the child into the right road, to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, keeping but not interfering*“.

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